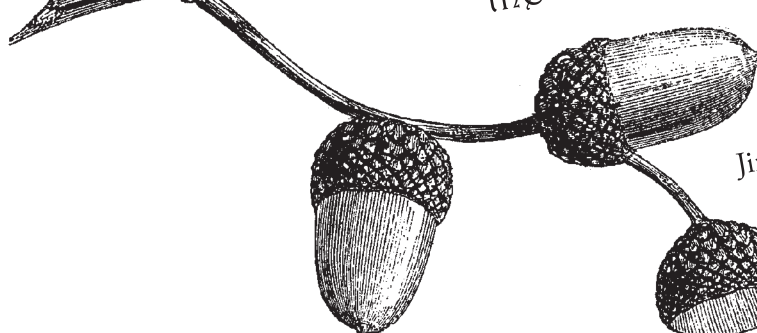


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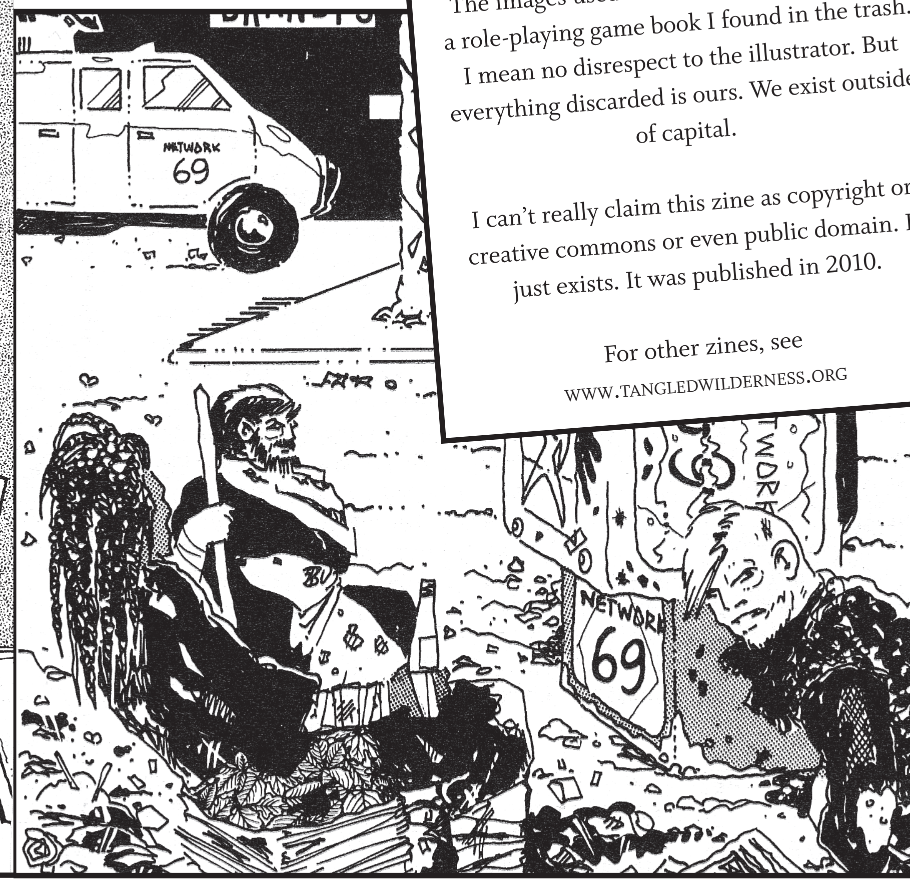
Jessup the Goblin



Jimmy T. Hand



for I—



The images used in this zine were cut out of a role-playing game book I found in the trash. I mean no disrespect to the illustrator. But everything discarded is ours. We exist outside of capital.

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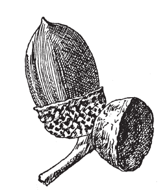
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you? Or do you mean the time away from chores so that you could practice, which the whole village gave you? Who decides what's fair, anyhow? Humans? Would it be 'fair' if we fought the humans one-on-one so they could just stomp us into the ground?"

Jessup sniffled, but stopped crying. He understood that his grandgoblin was right.

"Come on. After dinner we'll sneak over to this Benny fellow's tent and I'll teach you how to curse someone good and proper."

And for the first time that day, Jessup smiled.



If we want a legitimate culture of anything but yuppies, we're going to have to destroy capitalism. Then, perhaps, we'll be free to watch our culture spiral out organically into the chaotic interplay of diverse culture that we long for.

It's not hopeless, either. There are hackers still, and there's a thriving underground. There's squatting, there're illegal parties. You can fight the police and scare yuppies. There are street bazaars and markets and, hell, everyone is a pirate these days. The higher the corporate monolith, the deeper the shadows and the cracks.

Their dystopia is our dream.



Do you remember how, in the future, we were all going to be punks?

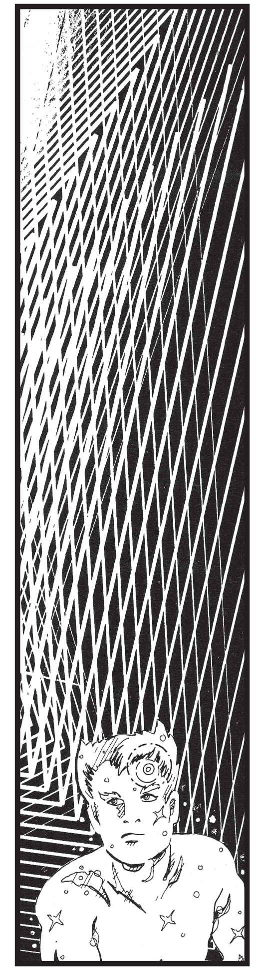
Do you remember how technology wasn't going to homogenize us, it was going to customize us?

Do you remember when we were going to live in alleys and in cathedrals and everything was going to be accompanied by bass synths?

Do you remember when there wasn't going to *be* a mainstream? We were all going to be part of six hundred thousand different cliques and subcultures?

Do you remember when science was going to address questions like "how do I make people more than human?" instead of questions like "how do I make it easier to never go outside?"

Fuck flying cars, I just want shit to be *weird*.



Later, in the family tent, his grandgoblin approached him. "Let me see that acorn. I must have screwed up the enchantment somehow."

Jessup told his grandgoblin about Benny. The old goblin jumped up, landed in the splits, and then did a handstand. Goblins do this sometimes when they're really, really angry. If they're only a little bit angry they leave off the handstand.

"Of course it was bloody magic! What kind of monster would lie to a child? If you'd needed a pep talk, I'd have given you a pep talk. What you needed was a magic acorn!"

At this, Jessup started crying again. "I wanted to win all on my own, fair and stuff."

"You've been listening to human malarky! 'All on your own?' What does that even mean? You mean with your own two legs, the ones that your parents gave

Once, not so long ago but in a place very different from here, there lived a little goblin boy. As everyone knows, all little goblins are called boys until they grow up and pick whether they want to be a goblin man or goblin woman or something else entirely.

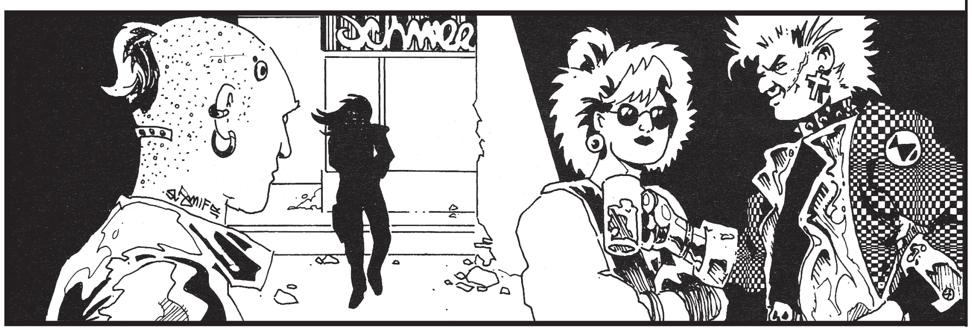
This little goblin's name was Jessup, and he wanted to be a runner more than anything else in the world. In those days, people used runners to pass messages between one village and the next. They had telephones, of course, but ringing someone up was considered rude and was only done in emergencies.

Every spring, each village held competitions to see which goblins were the fastest. The winners competed against the human boys in the great summer festival. Human children, of course, are both boys and girls. But the girls weren't allowed to

I guess I'm just nostalgic for the future of the days of yore. Take your pick, cyberpunk or steampunk. All I know is that shit was supposed to be more interesting than this. You're allowed to be weird for a few weeks a year at Burning Man, but the rest of the time you've got to slave away for Microsoft? No thank you.

I grew up on this stuff. I know how it's supposed to go: technology is for hacking. Corporations are for fighting. Abandoned buildings are for living. Guns are for pwning security drones (whether bio or mechanical). And the internet? The internet isn't a culture, it's a tool. Telecommunications are for taking on the Black ICE that stands between us and freedom (and fortune). This much I remember.

We long for this. We want vampires and unicorns and we want 2012 to reawaken the ancient races. But more than that, we just want something other than what we've got. We're desperate for a real culture, a diverse



I love WikiLeaks and wiki-anything. Why can't we have a wiki-culture?

I watch *The Warriors* and think "where're the gangs dressed up like baseball players?" I watch *Hackers* and wonder where the rollerblading cyberpunks are. Remember the liberatory promise of rave culture? Hell, of punk, of hip-hop?

All the subcultures had their souls drained by mainstream, capitalist culture as soon as they stuck their mohawks or flat-brimmed cap out from the underground. Capitalism is good at that. Taking things from the public domain and selling them back to the public is more or less what it's built to do.



compete because human culture is sexist.

Jessup practiced running every day and almost every night. He always stretched before and after, and he pushed his little green body to the edge of its endurance. But still, he was not very good at it. His legs were a little bit short, as was his breath.

One day, his grandgoblin came out from the hovel and found him crying by the slaughterhouse. Jessup had hoped the death-cries of the cats would cover his own sobs, but he was wrong.

"What's the matter?" Jessup's grandgoblin asked.

"I want to be a runner," Jessup said.

"And you will be."

"But I'm not very fast."

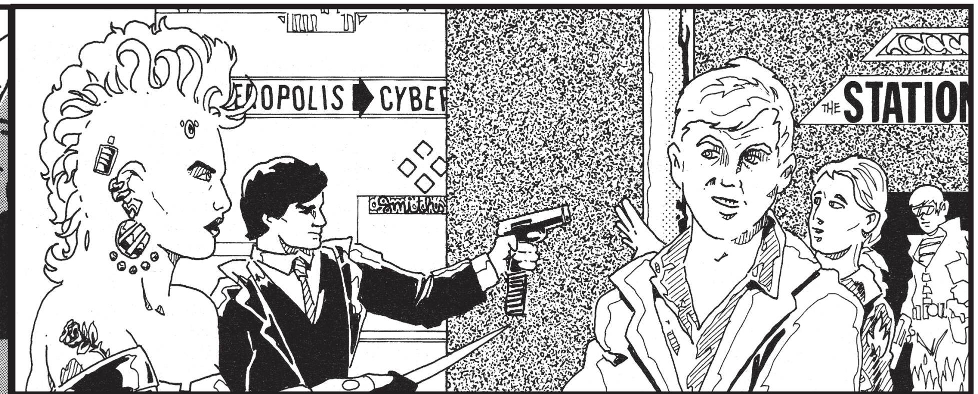
"There," Benny said. "You're the best goblin runner. You still are. The power has always been inside you."

The next morning, Jessup banished his insecurities and went out to the track. He'd won every race he'd been in, and he'd practiced every day. Of course he was good enough.

He didn't even worry overmuch when the human champion, Benny, came and took a place next to him.

The signal gun went off, and Jessup was left in the dust. He lost, by a lot. The shame crept into his face and hit his tear ducts, and suddenly he wished there was a slaughterhouse to hide behind. Instead, he faced the cheering humans of the audience.





world that's probably a little bit scarier than this one and certainly a hell of a lot more interesting.

I don't want MMORPGs, I don't want to settle for a *Second Life*. How do you tell people that you hate the internet without sounding like a luddite?

I remember when the internet was anonymity, when no one knew how old you were, what you looked like. I remember when the internet was gender play. When you could change your handle (and spoof your IP) and you were a different person. I remember when it was hack or be hacked. I sound like a curmudgeon. I remember the days before Facebook, before DRM. (Though at least the latter gives corporations only the *illusion* of control.)

Jessup told Benny about the acorn, and showed it to him.

"Bumblesticks," Benny said. "That's nothing but a rotten old acorn."

"No, it works. I've won every race."

"You've spent the last ten minutes talking about how much you practice. Your grandgoblin just gave you that silly thing he picked off the ground so that you'd have self-confidence. It's bonkey-juice, that's what it is"

"Maybe you're right," Jessup said.

"Of course I'm right. Here, let me see it."

Gathering his strength and his self-esteem as best he could, Jessup handed the magic acorn to Benny, who crushed it underfoot. At that moment, the human team scored their first goal of the game, and half the crowd roared.

'That's okay," his grandgoblin explained, "as long as you get there eventually. Lots of people are bad at their jobs, but society gets along fine. What matters is that you do what you enjoy."

"But I want to win the race!"

"Oh," his grandgoblin said, "well, in that case, I'll see what I can do."

Jessup stopped crying, and the two went home just in time for turnip and guano soup.

The next day, Jessup ran and ran. Then, just before sundown, his grandgoblin appeared and handed him an acorn.

"This isn't a normal acorn," the wise old goblin said.

"Yes, I can see that. The shell is cracked and the meat has rotted."

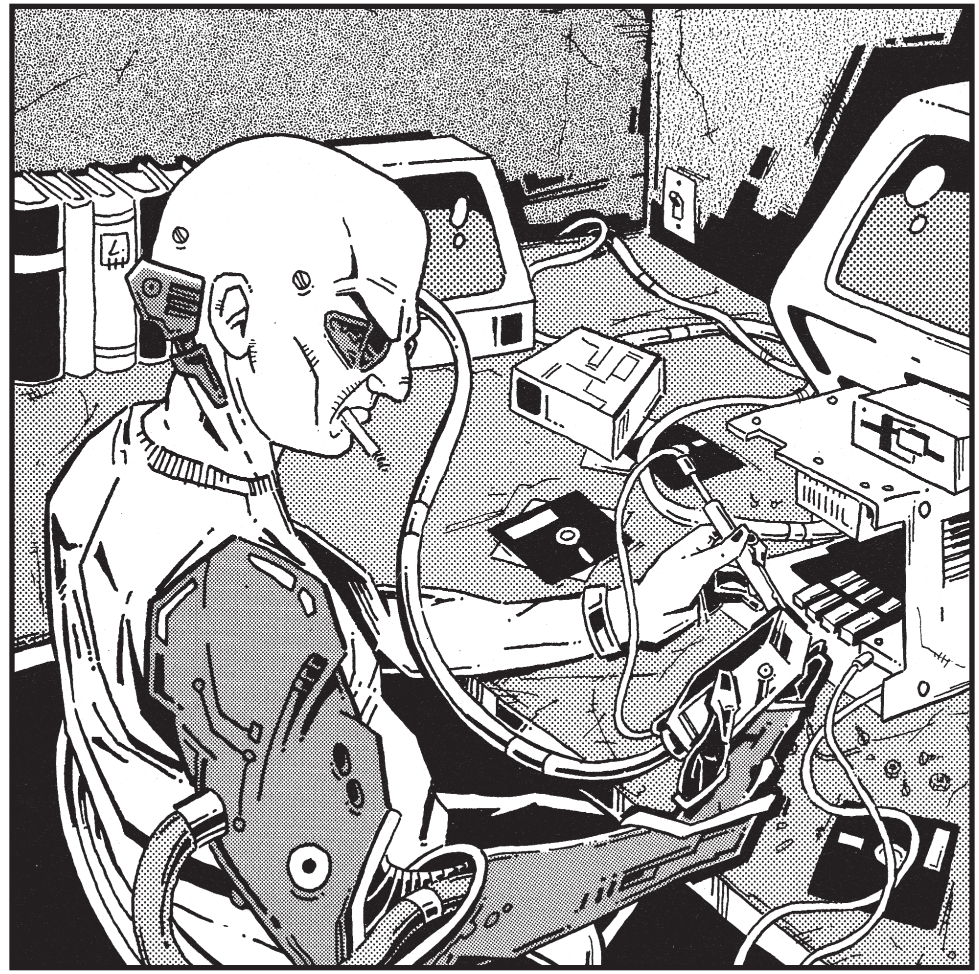


World of Warcraft is a far cry from the MUDs. Yeah, there's some gender play going on in Azeroth, but there is no liberty. Millions of people are playing just as they are told by Blizzard.

We need to reclaim telecommunication. Get the internet away from government, away from capital. Hell, we need to get *ourselves* away from government and capital, and I remember when computers seemed like a promising way to do it.

And that's just it. They still are. Encryption works. The age of Wi-Fi is another golden era of hacking. So why am I complaining?

Because in the future, we were all going to be punks. Instead, we're all on Facebook.



"And it's magic. As long as you've got that acorn in your pocket, you'll never lose a race."

Sure enough, when the time came, Jessup outran every boy in his village. He still practiced every day, but just because he loved to run.

When summer came, his whole clan—bristling with spears and blunderbusses, since humans were not very trustworthy—went with him to the festival grounds that lay between goblin and human territory.

Jessup had never seen such a place. The humans were giants, some up to two meters tall. Even the boys were as tall as a full-grown goblin. They ate revolting foods, like the flesh of herbivores, even bird meat. Some were the color of pigs, and their smell was overpowering. Still, they smiled the same as any goblin, and Jessup

knew that deep down, humans were people too. Even if they had the habit of, once every few generations, trying to wipe out all of goblinkind.

Jessup left his family to watch the games. There were human-only events like horseback jousting and there were goblin-only events like dogback polo, but the most spectacular were the all-people sports: archery, clock-building, and football. Goblin football teams, of course, had twice or three times the players; team size was determined by weight.

It was at a football match, the night before the foot race, that he met Benny. Benny was a human boy, only half again Jessup's height, with gangly limbs and wild hair. Jessup liked him immediately. Benny was interested in Jessup's story, and asked question after question of the goblins' champion runner.